

# Insignis

*Newsletter of the Alta Peak Chapter, celebrating and supporting the native plant communities in Tulare County, serving the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada Mountains and Foothills.*

Volume 19, Number 2

March 2009

## Field Trips...

First one on March 28, read about planning for 2009 wildflower walks.  
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May 2 in Three Rivers, our Alta Peak Chapter will be there..

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## SPRING FIELD TRIP

March 28, Saturday, 10 am  
BLM Land base of Case Mountain  
end of Skyline Dr in Three Rivers

*led by Melanie Keeley*

A wildflower walk in the lower foothill elevations in Blue Oak Woodland. Open to everyone. Bring a friend.

*Read more about this field trip on page 3*



Next issue of *Insignis* will have Plant sale information and pre-order forms.

**Visit Chapter Website  
updates on Field Trips...  
[www.altapeakcnps.org](http://www.altapeakcnps.org)**

## EARTH DAY EVENT

Saturday, May 2, 2009  
Three Rivers Memorial Building

sponsored by Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth (TCCRG)

website: [www.tccrg.org](http://www.tccrg.org)

There will be 27 diverse exhibits focusing on sustainable gardening, wildlife friendly backyards, reducing fire risk, conserving water, and our need to shrink our carbon footprint while lowering our home energy bills and reducing air pollution. There will be a student earth day art exhibit and a student environmental scavenger hunt. This is a community effort to achieve sustainability.

*For more information,  
call Carole Clum at 561-4661*

## from the Chapter President...

by Joan Stewart

Returning to the area, after a couple of weeks away, I am struck with the color on hills, roadsides, wherever one looks--expanses of white, yellow, orange, scatterings of blue and pink. These predictable displays of common spring wildflowers capture our attention; yet looking more closely, moving away from roads, there are many more species to be found even this early in the season. Higher, above the lower foothill chaparral types, but below where snow lies beneath pines and black oak, California Bay (*Umbellularia*), manzanita, *ceanothus* are in bud. Early-season walks can be as, if not more, rewarding as mid-summer. So climb, wander, seek the plants that reach out early growth in this time of lengthening days, warmer air and soil. Call a friend, go outside, explore.

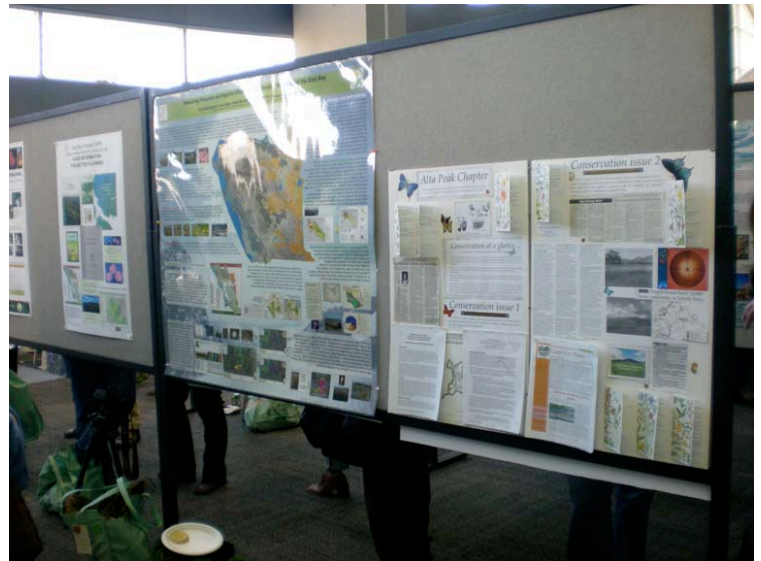
The traditional mid-winter, February, "ooh/aah" Chapter Program in Springville was a beautiful display of some of California's most colorful and interesting plants-- cacti, agave, yucca, nolina. Yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*), on dry hillsides in the Tule and Kaweah River canyon areas, occurs locally, at the northernmost extent of its range.

The March 14th State Chapter Council meeting is at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in southern California. If anyone needs a secondary inducement to consider knowing more about State-wide concerns and projects for CNPS, you might consider this chance to visit the Garden. We can expect to find many of the planted areas in full bloom; sections are arranged by vegetation type, showing natural groupings of species.

Elsah Cort and I attended the January Conservation Conference in Sacramento. The poster we developed to talk about our Tulare County Chapter was a welcome addition to the information displayed there. Each of us discovered new information, interesting ideas, and encouragement as we talked with, listened to, botanists, students, Chapter representatives, from throughout the state.

We also want to welcome Melanie Keeley who has joined our Board of Directors as Outreach Chair! She has been a great advocate for native plants in the Three Rivers area, collaborating with the Redbud Garden Club in creating native plant gardens at the Three Rivers Memorial Building, the Three Rivers Post Office, and at the two fire stations in Three Rivers. We invite you visit these sites to see how native plants look when they are growing in the garden setting. Many of these plants are tagged so you can identify them. If you are interested in helping out with the garden club work crews, contact Melanie for future dates.

And always, we continue to seek, hope for, offers from more of our members to take on some of the tasks, the fun, of maintaining Alta Peak Chapter as an active part of the State organization. Are you interested in knowing where help is needed? Contact me, Joan, or any of our other Board members listed in this newsletter.



from the January Conservation Conference in Sacramento...  
a fine art exhibit was part of the program that include all painting media and photography.





## 2009 Field trips and wildflower walks

*planning by Joan Stewart*

Firm schedules simply are not feasible at this time, with weather so uncertain in the coming months. We will be going out to seek and enjoy leaf patterns, flower color, intricate shapes and arrangements. I recently was out with couple of friends, and we realized how often we expect flowers to be "poppies"--- bright, obvious, symmetrically positioned petals. We remind ourselves to **Look**, forget trying to remember the name, **See** tiny intricate details, the way individual flowers and leaves are grouped along a stem.

What will the weeks ahead bring? Rain, snow, trail and road closures, or bright warm days that hasten plant growth and development? We return to last year's unfinished plan to explore high elevation mountain meadows. Many of these places we were able to visit last season only on a last minute basis...Onion Meadow, Caltha Meadow, the series along upper Freeman Creek. A delightful morning in Quaking Aspen meadow was a last-minute substitute for an inaccessible one. A trip to meadows in Sequoia Park was very special. As the season moves along, impromptu opportunities to go here or there will surely let us expand our list of places to visit. The best we can do for this *Insignis*, mailed in mid-March, is to say that we will be going out and up often in these coming months, offer some tentative ideas, and ask that you keep in touch, phone or email, and look on our Chapter website for field trip details at <http://www.altapeakcnps.org>.

The meeting place for most of the meadow walks will be where HWY 190 ends, Western Divide Hwy begins heading south, and North Road turns to the north. Pull off along North Road. We usually meet between 9:30 and 10:00, but to verify plans for any of the suggested hikes, call Joan (who would be more than glad to share tasks of planning, leading field trips with others...?).

April 25 and May 17 *might* be possible days to get into some of the lower meadows as the season moves along and access is more predictable. Air warms, water recedes from wet places, and corn lilies on the edges or dryer fringes push out their clumps of leaves (but bloom much later in summer). Orchids, gentians, grasses, sedges, rushes, 'onions', saxifrage, violets, as well as all the more common species bloom and await to be recognized, enjoyed.

June 20, (with a check-it-out climb on Wednesday the 17th) is a potential date for our annual chance to see two rare and photogenic lilies on Jordan Peak. Although this is a high elevation, 8-9,000', habitat the hike up is 'moderate' (as opposed to 'strenuous'). Call to confirm date and meeting place. After the disappointments and last minute changes we had to adapt to last year, I am very hesitant to be too sure of anything at this early date.

Perhaps small groups of you can organize walks of your own? Keep in touch, tell us what you find, and where.

## SPRING FIELD TRIP

**March 28, Saturday, 10 am**

**BLM Land base of Case Mountain in Three Rivers**  
*led by Melanie Baer-Keeley, restoration horticulturist*  
*for Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Parks*

Keeley currently operates the Ash Mountain Native Plant Nursery where she propagates native plants needed to re-vegetate disturbed areas within the parks. Professionally over the last 25 years, she has specialized in the cultivation and propagation of California native plants. Her work has included freelance writing, consulting, teaching about them.

The wildflower walk is up hill, but we will take a gentle pace. Elevation is 1200-2500 feet. Bring water and snacks. Bathroom is available at Elsay's house nearby.

*Directions:* follow HWY 198 east toward Sequoia Park. Turn right at the Three Rivers Veterans' Memorial Building. Follow Skyline Drive (the middle of 3 forks with a sign that says "not a through road") all the way to the end. Park on the road, but not on the private grassed yards. You can park in the Memorial Building parking lot and car pool up to the BLM gate at the end of Skyline Drive.

## Two Vernal Pool Workshops from CNPS

### Vernal Pool Plant Taxonomy, April 13-15, 2009

UC Davis and several Central Valley vernal Pool locations with Carol Witham, Rob Preston, Jennifer Buck, and Nick Jensen. Participants will acquire a higher level of knowledge and confidence in identifying vernal pool plants both in the laboratory and in the field. They will learn characters used to distinguish species beyond those used in the typical dichotomous plant key and gain field identification skills to make participants more efficient and effective at vernal pool vegetation assessments, floristic surveys and rare plant surveys. Fee is \$395 CNPS members, \$420 for non-members.

### Classification of Vernal Pool Plant Communities Apr 16-17

Yolo Bypass Center, Davis & Central Valley vernal pools with Michael Barbour, Ayzik Solomeshch, and Jennifer Buck

This is an intensive and pragmatic 2-day course on plant community identification, sampling design, and ecology. The course also reviews general plant community attributes and the relationship between vernal pool communities and rare species occurrence, conservation, restoration priorities, as well as vegetation mapping. The course is designed to accommodate consultants or agency staff individuals with diverse backgrounds who want or need to improve their knowledge of, and skills with, vernal pool vegetation and habitats. The class is being designed to specifically accommodate the needs of the California Department of Fish and Game and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service. Experience with vernal pool plants is highly recommended. Fee is \$320 CNPS members, non-members \$345.

**For more information call Josie Crawford at (916) 447-2677**  
<http://cnps.org/cnps/education/workshops/index.php>

## The Yarrow Lawn

by Melanie Keeley

(Melanie has joined the Board of Directors  
for Alta Peak Chapter as our Outreach Chair)

I am excited about new landscaping project for the County Fire Station in Three Rivers. Margie Ewen has designed a beautiful garden. One of the interesting aspects of this project is that we are going to plant a native yarrow lawn. This has been done down in Southern California at the Lummis Garden in Highland Park. It is beautiful and it will be a great example for folks in town as a possible drought-tolerant turf substitute.

### from Lummis Garden in Highland Park

When visiting El Alisal, the garden at the Lummis House in Los Angeles, one is drawn to the open lawn area near the house. This green oasis, in the otherwise desert-like setting, is often used for social gathering and fund raising events. What is not obvious about this lawn, unless a closer examination is made, is that it is not planted in grass.



Landscape Architect Bob Perry designed El Alisal as a drought demonstration garden. In keeping with this theme and the thought of maintenance mowing of turf grass, he decided to use yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) instead of turf grass. The details on the planting and maintenance of this yarrow lawn are described in the fall 1991 issue of Pacific Horticulture.

This treatment of an open usable space prompted us to try the same in the area west of our sales office. We use this area for company meeting, and employees often eat or rest here. Until

late 1990 it was planted in tall fescue, which we watered on a weekly basis and mowed every two weeks.

We planted our yarrow lawn in February 1991. In the months prior to planting, the existing grass lawn was sprayed with repeated applications of roundup and then physically removed. The soil was tilled and rolled to form a loose flat surface. Before the area was seeded, Autumn Moor Grass (*Sesleria autumnalis*) was planted in a well spaced uneven band along the back edged of the open space and 100 liner pots of *Achillea* Lavender Beauty', spaced evenly throughout the plot, were planted. The yarrow seed, mixed with a coarse sand, was applied next using a hand spreader. We used 1/8lb of both *Achillea millefolium* (white) and *Achillea millefolium* 'Rosey Red'. In using all of the seed in our 650 square foot area we slightly exceeded the recommended rate of application of 4 ounces per 1000 square feet. The surface was then top dressed with Kelloggs Topper applied with a wire roller and lightly irrigated. Then the newly planted area was kept damp until the yarrow began to germinate in the second week after planting. Once the surface was covered with the emerging seedlings, the intervals between watering and the duration on watering were steadily increased.

Now that the yarrow is established, we water it only when it begins to show signs of water stress which is about every two to three weeks. This long interval between watering is partially due to our loamy soil and the shade from the afternoon sun that the trees overhead provide. The planting has been fertilized twice a year during the growing season with Grow-Power (5-3-1) at a rate of about 25 lbs per 1000 square ft. During the winter months the surface remains green but little growth occurs and there is no need for irrigation, feeding or mowing.

The first mowing was done 8 weeks after planting and every 6 weeks thereafter from April through November. If the surface is not going to be walked on and more flowering is desired, the mowing intervals could be greatly extended. Even though the mower blade is set high (4"), the surface has a mowed, but not unattractive look that lasts for 1-2 weeks.

As a worldwork elder, you have to wait and follow environmental and human signals, dreams, the body signals, the wind, the trees, the direction of nature. Otherwise you will model the attempt at domination that is responsible for so many of our personal and world problems.

Doing nothing does not necessarily mean being totally passive. It means not pushing, following what is present and using the energy of what is happening instead of forcing things. At first, it is natural to push and try to force things to happen your way. Then, if things do not go your way, if nature does not support you, try questioning it. Test it, see if you are at an edge, and try again. Try a couple of times, and if it does not move in your direction, let go.

The pusher must learn to lose. Nature has the power...An elder is a channel for information pouring from the vast potential of nature into the moment of everyday life...as an elder, let "impossible" things happen.

from *Sitting in the Fire* by Arnold Mindell



## the mystery...

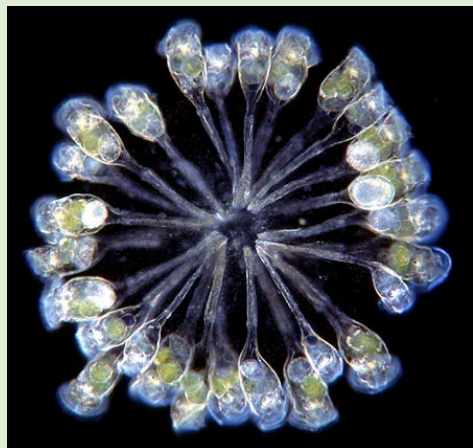
(from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard,  
1974 Dodd, Mead and Company)

So I think about this valley. And it occurs to me more and more that everything I have seen is wholly gratuitous. The giant water bug's predations, the frog's croak, the tree with the lights in it are not in any real sense necessary per se to the world, or to its creator. Nor am I. The creation in the first place, being itself, is the only necessity, for which I would die, and I shall. The point about that being, as I know it here and see it, is that, as I think about it, it accumulates in my mind as an extravagance of minutiae. The sheer fringe and network of detail seems to be the most important and visible fact about the creation. If you can't see the forest for the trees, then look at the trees; when you've looked at enough trees, you've seen a forest, you've got it. If the world is gratuitous, then the fringe of a goldfish's fin is a million times more so. The first question--the one crucial one--of the creation of the universe and the existence of something as a sign and an affront to nothing, is a blank one. I can't think about it. So it is to the fringe of that question that I affix my attention, to the fringe of the fish's fin, the intricacy of the world's spotted and speckled detail.

The old Kabbalistic phrase is "the Mystery of the Splintering of the Vessels." The words refer to the shrinking of imprisonment of essences within the various husk-covered forms of emanation or time. The Vessels splintered and solar systems spun; ciliated rotifers whirled in still water, and newts with gills laid tracks in the silt-bottomed creek. Not only did the Vessels splinter: they splintered exceedingly fine. Intricacy, then is the subject, the intricacy of the created world...

[from the QED:

**rotifer** noun. Zoology. a minute multicellular aquatic animal of the phylum Rotifera, having a characteristic wheel-like ciliated organ used in swimming and feeding. from the Latin, rota meaning "wheel"]



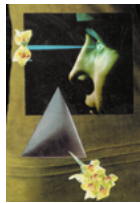
**rotifer:** *conochilus*  
photo by Wim van Egmond



*Thysanocarpus curvipes* Hook.  
**Fringe-Pod**  
Brassicaceae (Mustard Family)  
photo from <http://www.calflora.net>



**"The Blue Marble"**  
photo from <http://visibleearth.nasa.gov>



## Adopt a Plant Project

or what do squids and plants have in common?  
from Elsalh Cort

Dateline: February 3, 2009

During the recent (fantastic) Statewide Conservation Conference I was strongly impacted by the simple question asked by Jack Laws in his keynote presentation at the banquet: When did you first fall in love with nature? For a long time CNPS member, this could have seemed like a rhetorical question....but maybe not. As I was driving home from Sacramento south on HWY 99 (past Turlock where I was born and where, in the 1950's, I could swing in my Grandfather's old canvas hammock from his navy days, going high up in one direction to see a large expansive view of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and swinging in the other direction to clearly see the Coastal Mountain Range, all from the backyard) I thought a lot about this question.

More about this falling in love with nature a bit later....

I began to envision a little "project" to offer to the members of my local CNPS chapter, one where they would be encouraged to adopt a natural place, to visit it seasonally and observe its natural process, to learn about the plants growing there, to bring their kids, to take photographs and to send in reports that could be put in the Alta Peak Chapter newsletter. Even though many of our chapter members work professionally out in the field, most do it occasionally while trying to maintain busy and somewhat urbanized lives. I hoped that this idea would morph into encouraging members to have some "personal" time with the plants which have called California home longer than we have.

Then.....last week I finally took the time to look up a website that I had been directed to many months ago (this was for other endeavors in my professional life) and I found myself

"Squidoo'd." Some of you may know about this, as it has been around in the cybersphere for several years. Squidoo is a free-service, people-run search engine; individuals can create their own "lens" or website, without needing any particular website software loaded on their computers. The steps are easy to use, and the modular format for developing the lens is phenomenal. The "lens" is their compilation of information about any particular subject or notion (it really is much, much more.) You can read about the people behind squidoo itself at <http://www.squidoo.com/pages/about>; squidoo was founded by Seth Godin. ([www.sethgodin.typepad.com](http://www.sethgodin.typepad.com))

So what do squids and plants have in common? For me, this is answered with---their generosity! And, their breathing room! They are both prolific with producing seeds and exquisite diversity and beauty as they blossom and spread their roots.

And what is this Adopt a Plant notion?

The vision is for people to record and share their "personal contact" with plants, hopefully, native plants in particular. Using Squidoo, as both launching pad and home base, a lens can be created about a particular plant. Or several lenses can be created about particular plant communities and their plants. Information can be shared that is unique to the individual's perspective, botanical, and not necessarily scientifically oriented, more about the person and the plant. I call it "giving a plant a voice."

There are only two things to do to get started and join the Adopt a Plant Project:

1. Go outside and strike up a conversation with a real living native plant. Spend some time in its neighborhood.
2. Turn on your computer and go to <http://www.squidoo.com> and click on the blue button that says "Get started!"

When your plant lens is made, send it to the Adopt a Plant main lens, and it will be added to your state's Adopt a Plant list.

*Better still, take a young person with you to meet the plant and create a lens with a child!*

<http://www.squidoo.com/adoptaplant>  
<http://www.adoptaplantproject.com>

## in October 2009.....Chapter Plant Sale and Three Rivers Environmental Weekend

On the first Saturday in October, Alta Peak Chapter will again have its annual native plant sale at the Arts Center in Three Rivers. The next issue of *Insignis*, coming out in late summer, will include a pre-order form for Chapter members to receive a discount on native plant orders. We will be sharing the Arts Center with the TREW CREW, the group of citizens headed by Mona Selph, who will be organizing an exhibition of "green" information, groups and ideas. They will also host a green home tour to be held on Sunday of that weekend.

CNPS and the TREW CREW are co-sponsoring a **multi-media art exhibit with the theme "When and how did you first fall in love with Nature?"** All media will be accepted. Details will be given in the next newsletter, but start thinking about how you would like to answer this question in your favorite art media. If you want to write responses to this question, they will also be posted in the art exhibit.

**Chapter Fall Program will be on the Saturday in afternoon**, presented by naturalist, educator and artist John (Jack) Muir Laws, who delights in exploring the natural world and sharing this love with others. For six years, John Muir Laws backpacked the Sierra Nevada to research and illustrate *The Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada*, a richly illustrated (2,710 original watercolor paintings), pocket-size field guide to over 1,700 species found in the Sierra Nevada. This guide helps visitors or residents of the Sierra understand and appreciate the biodiversity of the region. Laws will present an illustrated lecture about the natural history of the Sierra Nevada, and the process of creating a field guide. This engaging program will highlight some of the beautifully and amazing species in the Sierra and the relationships between them. Laws will also discuss some of the conservation challenges in the Sierra Nevada and what stewards of nature are doing to confront them.



## Conversation report

by Joan Stewart

*Conservation is the underlying purpose for the California Native Plant Society. The work on these issues may not be as much fun as some other Chapter activities but we need always to keep in mind what our goal is and that what we do should be a means to this end. Several documents that could impact native vegetation in our part of the world currently are being evaluated and reviewed in this context.*

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Sequoia National Forest **Motorized Travel Management** was released on January 30. It allows for a 60 day comment period (and included a public workshop on February 21) before a decision is issued later this spring. The Forest Botanist, Fletcher Linton, has worked many hours, probably a good percentage of his time in recent months, to include carefully documented information about effects of the various alternative actions on plant resources. Five options are described, one of which is no-action, one the proposed action, and the other three stressing different issues. The underlying reason for such planning is to "[provide] for a diversity of motor vehicle recreation opportunities and [provide] motorized access to dispersed recreation opportunities in SNF."

Chapter 3.6 describes and compares potential impacts to plants that would follow the selection of each of the five alternative plans. Ninety three species on the Forest have been designated as Sensitive or Watch taxa and 37 of these need to be considered for the area covered by this Motorized Travel Management Plan. Known occurrences and potential habitat are treated in detail, and sources of information are cited. Related issues of hydrology, erosion, and diversity of vegetation on an ecosystem scale are discussed.

I, on behalf of CNPS, commend the staff for the thoroughness of these analyses for plant resources. Our formal comments will include this latter statement. Nevertheless, I will emphasize the more general philosophical argument that one goes to a natural area to see, hear, smell, feel, experience with all our senses, with whole bodies, the natural environment, the life of the "place." Putting a motor between a body and these natural aspects cancels or damages the natural experience, and for this reason it would seem an inconsistent "use" of trails, and roads through a forest.

Having made this point, there are two Alternatives that have less impact on botanical resources (and after all, isn't this what a Forest is?) than the one selected as the Proposed Action, which adds 28.7 miles of currently unauthorized routes as trails and roads for vehicle use. We support the one that opens the fewest miles to motorized vehicles. Discussing the document with others, we are forced to understand that whatever the Plan may state, implementation, enforcement, is the unanswered question.

Clearly without support from those who "use" the public land, sentences on paper have little meaning.

### Tulare County Issues

CNPS continues to participate in discussions about two not-yet-available documents.... the updated County General Plan, and the environmental impact report for Yokohl Valley Ranch development. Each of these will have important effects on the botanical resources of our area. We are prepared to comment if and when necessary. Of direct interest to the Yokohl Valley proposal, we have determined that there are 17 plant species of special concern that occur in areas nearby the Ranch site (access to the private land is highly restricted--one cannot simply wander around and look!) Fifteen of these are CNPS List 1B (Rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere) one is State / Federal Listed Rare, and one is List 2 (Rare threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere.) Vegetation includes oak woodland, grassland, and several forms of chaparral. The property rises to an upland area treated as California Condor habitat, not strictly a CNPS issue, but one that links our concerns to those of organizations with which we often coordinate.

CNPS is following discussions about proposed routes for power transmission lines, mostly below the foothills. We will review more detailed or final information as it becomes available to understand how these projects may affect plant resources. Recently there has been renewed interest in having a County Oak Ordinance. This might refer to individual trees, to "woodlands," to native trees generally, or specifically to oak species. Compliance might be voluntary, via a permit process, or emphasize education. Concern about our area's oak trees is certainly warranted, and consistent with the CNPS mission of protecting native plants in their natural habitats. As discussions continue on how such an ordinance might be written, we will review and comment on draft documents.

### Lupine Research: a call for help

from Jessica Shade, PhD Candidate, Simms Lab,  
Dept of Integrative Biology, UC Berkeley

Have you ever had trouble keying Lupines to species in the field? Have you ever doubted the biological reality of different lupine species? Finally, these *Lupinus* mysteries are being investigated! A study at University of California, Berkeley is examining the origins and spread of *Lupinus nanus* and *Lupinus bicolor* in California. Samples will be taken from populations throughout the state, and analyzed using Legume CYCLOIDEA (LEGCYC) genes and microsatellites to determine the phylogenetic relationships of these two species. Collections will start mid-March and continue through the flowering season. If you, or anyone you know, has seen these species growing together (or within a five mile radius from each other) please contact me. I am desperate need of help finding collection sites! Jessica (831) 295-9677 [shade@berkeley.edu](mailto:shade@berkeley.edu)

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## JOIN CNPS today and INVITE YOUR FRIENDS to JOIN with you!

*The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and how to conserve them and their natural habitats through education, science, advocacy, horticulture and land stewardship.*

### CNPS members enjoy the following benefits, and more:

- Membership in the statewide CNPS organization
- Affiliation with the local CNPS chapter
- Quarterly *Fremontia* journal
- Quarterly CNPS Bulletin
- The local chapter newsletter
- Access to a wide range of local and statewide activities
- Meeting people with similar interests
- Access to chapter plant sales, book sales, lectures, classes, workshops, hikes, field trips, and wildflower shows
- NEW: A membership card with benefits from partner organizations like Smith and Hawken and *Pacific Horticulture Magazine*

[www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org)

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